

REMARKS

Claims 21-40 remain in this application. Claims 21-22, 24-25, 29, and 35-39 have been withdrawn. Claims 23, 26-27, and 40 have been amended.

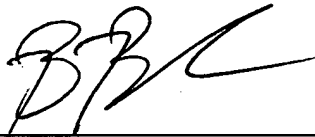
In the present Office Action, the Examiner states that this application contains claims directed to the following two patentably distinct species of the claimed invention: Species 1, including Figs. 1-6 and Species 2, including Figs. 7-8. The Examiner further required that the Applicant elects among one of the two species for prosecution on the merits. In response, the Applicant hereby elects the subject matter identified as comprising the Species 1 of Figs. 1-6, including previously presented Claims 30-34 and currently amended Claims 23, 26-27, and 40, without traverse by the Applicant.

In view of the foregoing, the Applicant respectfully requests an examination on the merits of the elected claims (i.e., Claims 23, 26-27, 30-34, and 40). Reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejections is respectfully requested, and a timely Notice of Allowability is solicited. To the extent it would be helpful to placing this application in condition for allowance, the Applicant encourages the Examiner to contact the undersigned counsel and conduct a telephonic interview.

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To the extent necessary, Applicant petitions the Commissioner for a one-month extension of time, extending to April 19, 2004, the period for response to the Office Action dated February 19, 2004. The Commissioner is authorized to charge any shortage in fees due in connection with the filing of this paper, including extension of time fees, to Deposit Account No. 50-0639.

Respectfully submitted,



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